

Central MRS Meeting
February 24, 2005
Guilford County DSS

Counties Present: Alamance, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Durham, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Moore, Person, Union, Wake

Non MRS Counties: Gaston, Stanly

State Staff: Tony Troop, Tom Smith, Heather Thomas

Agenda

Division Stuff

Training/Letters

General Announcements

Documentation what/why

How do social workers do it

How do Supervisors review it

Training/Administrative Letters

- DV policy training started, reminder that the 52 are only priority until 6/30/04 (sessions filling up fast so sign up quickly! This training will be ongoing, so more people can get in later sessions, it is recommended that front line staff attend the first ones.)
- Change Notice Pregnancy Svcs (Ch 12) contact Tina B.
- Web Based Training letter was sent out with schedule, counties can swap with each other if they work it out amongst themselves and let Heather know
- Post Adoption Service letter 2/10
- Work First 2005-2007 TANF state plan, TANF participation rates

Announcements

- MRS policy consultant position (Tony's former position) open home based.
- Evaluation Duke is doing our evaluation they will be sending a letter to county Directors regarding consent forms to contact families.
- Legislation MRS legislation is ready to be presented to General Assembly. These changes are our #1 priority. Counties should not be surprised if we call them.

Bogus or Malicious Reports

- There has been a lot of discussion about malicious reports. Referred to as bogus reports in policy and discussed in original MRS manual.
- If case is assigned Family Assessment and the SW goes to the home and sees that there is clearly no issue, still have to complete the tool (and interviews collaterals if necessary*). Then can disengage from the family.

(*Note: If you complete assessment and you were able to accurately assess safety issues without having to interview collaterals you should not be penalized in a Review.)

- Bogus reports have nothing to do with assessing reporters motive. If the report fits the 3 categories (juvenile, caretaker, abuse/neglect/dependency) then agency has to take it. Basically, issue of bogus/malicious reporting does not affect intake.
- General Assembly charged us to look at reporting structure therefore a survey sent to all counties asking for numbers of reports considered bogus .
- There will be a **work group** formed around this issue. Each county will be able to send one person. This person must have the authority to speak for your agency.
 - This work group will re-write MRS policy, bogus reports will be the first issue addressed.
 - This group will become the Policy Development Work Group and do other things.

Documentation

- Tony has heard that caseloads and documentation are barriers to good service provision
- Alamance and Wake brought material (Tony has copies)
 - Alamance a lot of this was adapted from Guilford. Includes questions to prepare workers for CFT, and material that prompts workers to ask certain question at visits. Also have an MRS pamphlet in Spanish.
 - Wake MRS brochure, a sticker they hand out that includes relevant DSS phone numbers. Also have taken the MRS policy and inserted Wake County protocol in the appropriate sections so that workers can access everything in one place

Why do we do documentation?

- Case/Child History
- Show good work staff has done
- Capture info for possible court cases building & for good decision making
- So you can put it out of your head (and make room for the next case!)
- Maintains family connections
- Accountability to state, community, agency (both as a system and for individual social workers)
- Funding

What makes good documentation?

- Concise - don't go on with non-critical things, be concisely descriptive as it *relates to the issues*
- Legible/Typed (preferably bold or highlight categories)
- Identify people and their roles definitively (Mr. Troop was this dad, uncle, grandfather?)

- Have check boxes to ensure workers complete all requirements
- Address all CPS issues, even ones not specifically on report (global assessments)
 - Concern that have to beware of getting too proscriptive don't want to end up with a recipe for assessments so that the quality and thoroughness of assessments may go down.)
- Write it for the reader (take notes for yourself, but write the narrative for someone unfamiliar with the case)
- Facts not opinions (not only will opinions not stand up in court, they are not fair to the family)
- Counties that felt they had a good handle on documentation as a system: Alamance, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Durham, Gaston, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Moore

Management/Agency Expectations – what does the agency do/expect in order to get good documentation?

- Have the expectation that we will do business this way. This attitude has to come from the top down.

How does this happen – how does the work get done and result in good documentation?

- Peer review workers review each others cases with a review tool. When the case closes the worker will review their own case with that tool (Moore).
- Bring 5 records to supervision each week and review with supervisor, 1 record per month for each worker pulled for more thorough review (Mecklenburg).
- Using the 90 days no services report and reviewing those cases.
- Gaston has a supervisor who is very good at writing narrative and once a month she holds a training on narrative writing.
- Rotate taking a week off from accepting any new reports all workers rotate through on this
- Documentation Day have a lockdown, bring lunch and supervisors handle any emergencies that come in,
- Rotate a workday at home if they want
- Allow them to handwrite records if their writing is legible
- Agency-wide formatting of records so that all records look the same.
- Comment made that need to change the assessors and case planners to prioritize documentation and complete it as it happens. (Intake and on call workers do this.)

What are the barriers to making it happen?

- Crisis/Petitions
- Caseloads (esp. multiple reports in one day)
- Turnover, vacancies, shortages
- Burnout

- Worker personality some are very enthusiastic in the field but have poor paperwork skills
- Repetitive forms

How to overcome the barriers?

- Take off 1 turn in the rotation of assigning cases when they file a petition (Davidson, Guilford, and Mecklenburg skips 2 turns if there are 4 or more children).
- Keep a handle on caseload size. How?
 - Get in a mindset to staff cases on a regular basis. (Don't staff them, can't move them!)
 - Take a close look at cases that are open a long time (set a county definition of long time).
 - Team staffings that include people from multiple service areas (not just 210 workers) are more effective.
 - Make sure you only have cases open that have safety issues.

Future Meetings

- No meeting of the 52 in March, will wait until the Training Institute in March to meet as a group.
- Regional meetings in March check list serve for meeting schedule.
- Tony will see if someone from the review team can attend a future meeting